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ABSTRACT

The purpose, design, and key findings of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) are discussed. The SASS is a triennial set of unified surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. In conjunction with a teacher follow-up survey, the SASS profiles the nation's elementary school and secondary school teaching force and analyzes questions of teacher supply and demand. The four separate surveys are: (1) the Teacher Demand and Shortage Survey; (2) the School Administrator Survey; (3) the School Survey; and (4) the Teacher Survey. Each SASS questionnaire contains a core that is a stable set of items and a module of additional items that can vary for each administration of the SASS. Key results from the 1987-88 SASS and the Teacher Follow-Up are available, allowing policymakers and planners to follow selected trends in teacher supply and demand and teacher characteristics from 1987-88 through 1990-91. Selected trends in school and staffing include the following: demographic characteristics of the teacher workforce remained stable between 1987-88 and 1990-91; a higher percentage of teachers in 1991 than in 1988 reported that they plan to stay in teaching as long as they are able; and in 1991 fewer secondary school teachers viewed alcohol and drug abuse by students as serious problems in their schools when compared with 1988. (SLD)

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Trends in Schools and Staffing: 1987-88 to 1990-91

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American Statistical Association
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Introduction to the Schools and Staffing Survey

The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) is an triennial survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. The SASS has been administered in school years 1987-88 and 1990-91, and will continue to be conducted at three-year intervals. SASS is not, however, a single survey, but a unified set of surveys that facilitates comparison between public and private schools, and allow linkages of teacher, school, school district, and administrator data. The SASS is also complemented by a Teacher Followup Survey (TFS), which collects one-year followup information on the teacher's employment and teaching status, educational activities and future plans, and opinions on school climate and job perceptions.

Analytical objectives

The analytical objectives for SASS address five major areas of concern. Educators and educational policy makers may use data from SASS to:

1. Profile the nation's elementary and secondary teaching force;
2. Improve estimates and projections of teacher demand by teaching field, sector, level, and geographic location;
3. Analyze teacher mobility and turnover;
4. Develop measures of teacher quality and qualifications; and
5. Obtain information on school policies, programs, and practices, administrator characteristics, teacher characteristics, and workplace conditions.

Furthermore, the SASS sample has been designed to support the following types of estimates and comparisons:

1. National and state estimates about public schools and teachers;
2. Estimates for private schools and teachers at the national level and for major affiliation groupings; and

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3. National comparisons of elementary, secondary, and combined schools and of teachers in those schools.

With these objectives in place, SASS data can then be used to address, at least in part, policy questions like the following:

What is the extent of turnover in the nation's teaching force? How has it changed over time?

What are the sources of new teachers? Have they changed over time?

Do the nation's teachers have adequate background to perform their function well? Has the quality of teachers changed over time? How?

Are the nation's school administrators adequately prepared to carry out their functions as educational and managerial leaders? Has their preparation changed over time?

How are school programs and policies related to teacher turnover and attrition? Has this relationship changed over time?

Survey Content

The SASS consists of four separate surveys administered simultaneously to linked samples of respondents. These surveys are the Teacher Demand and Shortage Survey, the School Administrator Survey, the School Survey, and the Teacher Survey. The Teacher Followup Survey, conducted one year after the SASS, follows up on information collected in the Teacher Survey and provides additional information about job mobility within the teaching profession, as well as between teaching and other careers.

The Teacher Demand and Shortage Survey was mailed to public school districts and private schools. The survey collected information on enrollments and teachers including student enrollments, number of teachers, position vacancies, and new hires. Another section of the questionnaire collected district (or private school) policies on teacher salaries, hiring practices, and high school graduation requirements. The final section of the survey focused on demographic characteristics of the student population and the teaching work force.

The School Administrator Survey obtained information about the training, experience, professional background, and job activities of school principals or headmaster/headmistresses.

The School Survey obtained information about student characteristics, staffing patterns, student-teacher ratios, types of programs and services offered, length of school day and school year, graduation and college application rates, and teacher

turnover rates. It also collected information from private schools on their religious affiliation and association memberships.

The Teacher Survey collected information from teachers regarding their education and training, teaching assignments, teaching experience, certification, teaching workload, perceptions and attitudes about teaching, job mobility, and workplace conditions.

Design Features

The Schools and Staffing Survey was designed to collect information on teacher supply and demand, the composition of the administrator and teacher workforce, and the status of teaching and schooling generally. SASS is a mail survey with telephone followup of late respondents and nonrespondents. For the 1987-88 SASS, a sample of 67,771 (56,242 public and 11,529 private) from 12,830 schools (9,317 public and 3,513 private) was used to gather this information. The 5,592 local education agencies (LEAs) associated with the public schools were also surveyed.

The SASS survey is a stratified sample. Schools were first classified by sector (public or private). Public schools were stratified by the 50 states and District of Columbia and then by three grade levels (elementary, secondary, or combined), resulting in 153 strata. Within each sample public school, an average teacher sample size of four, eight, and six teachers was selected from elementary, secondary, and combined schools, respectively.

The private schools were stratified by grade level and religious affiliation. Within each sample private school, an average teacher sample size of four, five, and three teachers was selected from elementary, secondary, and combined schools, respectively.

To improve the precision of SASS change estimates from 1987-88 to 1990-91, 30 percent of the 1990-91 public school sample was also in sample for 1987-88. For the private school sample, associations with a high response rate also had a 30 percent overlap. Associations with lower response rates had smaller percentages of school overlap. Associations with poor response rates had minimal school overlap.

Additional information on the Schools and Staffing Survey is available in the technical report entitled 1988 Schools and Staffing Survey: Sample Design and Estimation (NCES 92-079). This report is available free of charge by calling 1-800-424-1616. In addition, a new SASS Quality Profile is being developed to provide additional information on the quality of SASS data, including survey and item response rates, sampling and non-sampling error, and internal and external consistency and validity.

The SASS Core

Each SASS questionnaire consists of two parts: the **core** and the **module**. The **core** is a stable set of items from each of the SASS questionnaires. Core constitutes the most essential parts of SASS, to be repeated with each administration of SASS, and without which the primary objectives of SASS could not be realized. These items are chosen based upon their use as a standard trend item, as an important classification or analysis variable, or as an important variable for methodology purposes (e.g. skip patterns, editing). The core is reviewed and potentially revised on a regular (but relatively infrequent) schedule, in order to allow for question revision and additions and deletions from core.

The **module** is an additional set of items that can vary for each administration of SASS. These items are in the module because they do not need to be measured every two years, because they respond to new policy issues, or because they are new or problematic items which do not yet have the stability to be included in core. The module may consist of a group of items on a topic or individual items.

The core set of items appear at the beginning of the questionnaire, followed by the module. The separation between the core and the module, however, is transparent to the respondent. All of the core items (with the exception of the demographic items for individual respondents) will appear at the front of the questionnaire. The core is followed immediately by the module, which may consist of a group of items on a topic or individual items.

An important feature of this approach is that the core items remain stable for several administrations of SASS. This stability has several advantages. First, the core part of the questionnaire can be designed in forms design at Census and ready to go to print as soon as the module is ready. Second, the processing specifications (clerical edits, pre-edits, edits, imputation, etc.) for the core section remains stable and not need to be recreated for each SASS. Finally, the stability of the core enables analysts and data users to expect that certain estimates will be available consistently for trend analysis. Thus, the use of the core/module approach will decrease the time needed for tape delivery, as well as enabling NCES staff to plan basic publications prior to tape delivery.

Another important feature of this system is the ability to modify core on a regular (if relatively infrequent) basis. This feature allows us to use the module to explore new policy areas as well as trying out new items or new versions of problematic items. As such items become stable, a determination can be made to insert them into the core at the next scheduled revision. Thus, the module provides us with the opportunity to test new and revised items within the full-scale SASS.

One other point that should be made has to do with the opinion items on the teacher and administrator forms. Opinion items are not part of the core because the specific items and the issues that they address are likely to change for each administration of SASS. However, a section on perceptions and opinions will appear in the module portion of each SASS, so that these types of questions will consistently appear (perhaps on a rotating basis) in each SASS.

Key Results from the 1987-88 SASS

SASS Profile Report

A compendium of basic statistics from the 1987-88 SASS and 1988-89 TFS is now available from the National Center for Education Statistics. This report, Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile: 1987-88 (NCES 92-120), is an integral part of NCES' plan to monitor trends in education. This SASS profile report will be published after each administration of SASS (every three years), and will provide basic statistics from the current SASS as well as trends in key statistics from prior administrations of SASS.

The SASS profile report consists of eight chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the Schools and Staffing Survey. Chapter 2 profiles the nation's public and private elementary and secondary schools and students. Chapter 3 describes the teachers, principals, and others who make up the school work force. The focus of Chapter 4 is on working conditions in the schools, particularly issues of teaching load, class size, and fields of assignment. Chapter 5 addresses questions of compensation such as teacher and principal earnings and benefits. Next, Chapter 6 explores teacher and principal attitudes toward school policies and practices, their satisfaction with the profession, and their perceptions of school problems and of their influence on school practices. Chapter 7 examines the complex issues of supply, demand, and shortage of teachers by looking at vacancies and how they are addressed, teacher turnover, sources of new hires, and the stability of the work force in terms of retention and separation of teachers from schools. Chapter 8 concludes the report. Appendix A contains the Technical Notes, which provide detailed information about the survey and sample, the data sets, methodology, and accuracy of the estimates. Appendix B includes standard errors of the estimates cited in the text of the report and standard errors for selected state tables.

In exploring these issues, the SASS profile report takes advantage of the integrated nature of the SASS sample. Most of the tables classify information from all of the SASS surveys by type of school. Each of these tables has a total row for all public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States, as well as total rows for public and private schools

separately. Within each sector, data are reported by community type (urban, suburban, and rural-small city), and within each community type, by school level (elementary, secondary, and combined), percent minority enrollment (less than 20% and 20% or more), and school size (less than 150 students, 150 to 499, 500 to 749, and 750 or more). In addition to this classification system, selected statistics are presented for public schools by state and for private schools by religious affiliation.

The remainder of this section will provide some very limited findings from the SASS profile report. It is important to remember that what is shown in this paper is just a small sample of the information available in the report. It is also important to note that the SASS profile report can provide only a limited look at the types of analyses that are possible with the SASS data set. The SASS profile report is available from the Government Printing Office and can be ordered by calling 1-800-424-1616.

Selected Findings

Urban public schools in 1987-88 were much more likely than public schools in other community types, or private schools in any community type, to have a minority enrollment of 20 percent or more. Whereas 75 percent of urban public schools had a minority enrollment of 20 percent or more, only 35 percent of suburban and 28 percent of rural or small city public schools had such an enrollment. In the private sector 44 percent of urban schools had a minority enrollment of 20 percent or more, compared with only 23 percent of suburban schools and 12 percent of rural or small city schools.

In 1987-88, the teaching force was overwhelmingly female (72 percent). In both pubic and private sectors across community types, male teachers were more likely to be teaching in secondary rather than elementary schools. The majority of all school principals were male (69 percent), but their proportions in public and private schools varied significantly. Three-quarters of all public school principals were male, versus only 48 percent of private school principals.

The average base salary among all full-time teachers in 1987-88 was $25,205; the average public school teacher base salary was $26,231 and the average private school teacher base salary was $16,562.

Public school teachers in self-contained classrooms taught more total hours per week in basic subject areas--English, mathematics, social studies, and science--on average, than their private school counterparts (20.9 compared with 18.2).

There were considerable differences in average class size in public and private schools in 1987-88: the average class size for public school teachers in departmentalized subjects was 23.8

students, while for private school teachers it was 20.7 (teachers in departments are mostly at the secondary level. For teachers in self-contained classrooms, the average class size in public schools was 26.0, while for teachers in private schools it was 22.6 (most self-contained classrooms are in elementary schools).

In 1988-89, 94 percent of all 1987-88 teachers remained in teaching and 6 percent had left the profession. Private school teachers were more likely to leave the profession than were public school teachers; 13 percent of private school teachers left between 1987-88 and 1988-89, compared to 6 percent of public school teachers.

Selected Trends in Schools and Staffing: 1987-88 to 1990-91

Demographic characteristics of the teacher workforce remained stable between 1987-88 and 1990-91. In both years, about 72 percent of all public school teachers were female, almost 90 percent were white, about 97 percent were not of Hispanic origin, and about 73 percent were married. In addition, about 95 percent of all public school teachers in both years described themselves as regular full- or part-time teachers (as opposed to itinerant teachers or long-term substitutes), 99 percent reported that they had a bachelor's degree, and about 47 percent also had earned a master's degree.

This stability in basic characteristics was also evident among private school teachers. About 78 percent of private school teachers in 1987-88 were female and 77 percent of 1991 private school teachers were female (this difference is not statistically significant). About 95 percent of private school teachers in both years were white, 97 percent were not of Hispanic origin, and about 65 percent were married. About 99 percent of private school teachers in both years reported that they were regular full- or part-time teachers. While about the same percentage of private school teachers reported having earned a bachelor's degree (95 percent in 1988 and 94 percent in 1991), slightly fewer private school teachers in 1991 had earned a master's degree (31 percent in 1991 versus 34 percent in 1988).

Teachers opinions about the teaching profession improved between 1988 and 1991. Among both public and private school teachers, a higher percentage said that they "certainly would" become a teacher again in 1991 than in 1988. While 32 percent of public school teachers and 45 percent of private school teachers choose this response in 1988, 37 and 50 percent of public and private school teachers, respectively, said that they certainly would become a teacher again in 1991.

A higher percentage of teachers in 1991 than in 1988 also reported that they plan to stay in teaching as long as they are able. Among public school teachers, the percentage of teachers who plan to stay in teaching as long as they are able was up to

35 percent in 1991 from 31 percent in 1988, and among private school teachers it was up to 54 percent from 50 percent in 1988.

In 1991, fewer secondary school teachers viewed alcohol and drug abuse by students as serious problems in their schools when compared with 1988. About 16 percent of public school teachers and 5 percent of private school teachers said that alcohol use was a serious problem in their schools in 1991, versus 21.5 percent and 7 percent of public and private school teachers, respectively, in 1988. A similar decline is seen in teachers' perceptions of the seriousness of drug abuse in their schools. While 15 percent of public school teachers and 3 percent of private school teachers said that drug abuse was a serious problem in their schools in 1988, only 8 percent of public and 1 percent of private school teachers said it was a serious problem in 1991.

Despite recent increasing attention to the presence of guns and other weapons on school grounds, however, teachers did not report that student possession of weapons was a serious problem more often in 1991 than they did in 1988.